



RAUL RUBIERA / Miami Herald Staff

**TREED OFF:** Miami Roads residents Joe Wilkin, Miriam Moore and Carmen Petsoules were so upset about plans to cut into the area's shady parkway medians that they fought city hall — and won. The battle took nearly three years.

# Residents win fight to save parks

By PEGGY ROGERS  
Herald Writer

After more than 2½ years of struggling with Miami bureaucracy, residents of **The Roads** neighborhood have blocked efforts to widen their roads at the expense of the area's broad, shady parkway median.

The Roads, designed in 1921 by a member of Dade's pioneer Brickell family, was built with parks in the middle of its streets instead of along the side.

Miami commissioners have now designated those median parks as a "scenic transportation corridor." That places the parkways under the protection of Miami's environmental preservation code and requires that any work performed on them first be approved at a public hearing.

The designation ends a struggle by Roads residents who banded together almost three years ago to protest a city street-widening, park-narrowing plan.

"When I moved here I fell in love with those

parkways," said resident Carmen Petsoules. "I said to myself, 'My God, they're going to take those beautiful parkways out. The only way we're going to get this taken care of is by fighting.'"

"Once we got organized and rallied, and the city saw we were for real and were going to stick with it, I think they saw we were serious," said Joe Wilkins, president of the Miami Roads Neighborhood Civic Association.

It wasn't a short struggle. The community requested reviews by several city departments, two advisory boards and the City Commission.

The Roads area is west of Interstate 95 at the Rickenbacker Causeway exit. The medians to be protected extend from Southwest First to Fifth avenues and from 23rd to 27th roads.

Residents say they kept plugging on the issue out of pride in their community. The also studied the history of their area and learned a valuable civic lesson.

The history: Mary Brickell designed the neighborhood in 1921, creating parks in the

medians. Lots were sold for homes at a 1922 auction staged from a tent in the middle of 25th Road and Second Avenue.

The sales pitch billed the area to snowbirds as "adjacent to millionaire's row," a reference to the exclusive bay-front area just to the east. "Don't be afraid to live near millionaires, they make nice neighbors," sales brochures read.

The civics lesson: Numbers count before city commissioners. The struggle to preserve the parks created the need for a neighborhood civic group. "We got so upset about the widening that we fought that and out of that the association was formed," said association treasurer John Guinness. About 250 households now belong to it.

A problem now is flower vendors and commercial trucks that station themselves on the medians. Association members ask them to leave or put fliers on their windshields explaining that they are breaking the law.

"I think The Roads is a very pretty section, and it's sort of a warfare trying to keep it," Guinness said.